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SUBJECT: CDU/Teufel: Insider View of European Constitution

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Baden-Wuerttemberg Minister-President (M-P) Erwin Teufel (CDU - Christian Democratic Union), a prominent German conservative and active participant in drafting the proposed European constitution, supports the draft constitution despite its shortcomings from a conservative perspective. A Convention insider, Teufel appears committed to enacting the constitution, but other German opposition figures may see political opportunity in highlighting its perceived flaws. Conservative unhappiness on issues such as immigration and traditional values could limit German popular acceptance of the proposed constitution. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Pol/Econ reps met with Dr. Alexandra Zoller (responsible for European Affairs in Baden-Wuerttemberg) who accompanied Teufel to "European Convention" meetings over the past year. As one of 108 delegates to the Convention, Teufel represented the Bundesrat and the 16 German states (FM Joschka Fischer represented the national government and former MdB Juergen Meyer (SPD) represented the Bundestag) in the process of drafting a European constitution to redefine the EU's institutions and authority.

EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION FROM A CONSERVATIVE GERMAN VIEWPOINT

3. (SBU) At the Convention, Teufel sought to limit control from Brussels on issues conservatives feel are better handled at the local or national level. Both Teufel and the Schroeder government wanted to specify which powers would be assigned to the EU, national, and sub-national authorities. Teufel acknowledges that security and foreign relations need to be coordinated at the EU level, and that the EU must continue to govern trade, monetary policy, and commerce. At the same time, Teufel sought to guarantee local authority over many bread-and-butter issues including utilities, infrastructure, land use, and elements of social policy. In Dr. Zoller's view, the Schroeder government gave only half-hearted support for local empowerment, and Teufel was ultimately unsuccessful.

4. (SBU) Zoller expressed concern over issues such as immigration, asylum, and labor market participation. Under the current draft, some of these issues will now only require a qualified majority vote. Most Germans worry about the burden of immigrants and asylum seekers, and conservatives may try to capitalize on any future EU liberalization under the new voting procedures.

5. (SBU) Like many others in the CDU, Teufel remains opposed to Turkish EU membership and says that the EU could become unwieldy and overly costly if it grows too large, too quickly. Zoller raised concerns that an Islamic country (Turkey) would be the most populous country within the EU by 2020, implying that Turkey is too big, too poor, and too different culturally for the EU to digest successfully, even in the long run. Teufel supported inserting a preamble reference to the EU's Christian foundations (similar to the Polish constitution), an initiative opposed by the French and others who considered it offensive to other faiths. NOTE: The final preamble text makes general reference to the "cultural, religious, and humanist inheritance of Europe" but does not refer to any specific religion. END NOTE.

COMMENT

6. (SBU) Personally committed, Teufel sees the draft Constitution as a flawed but acceptable compromise -- a position generally in line with Schroeder and Fischer's view that the current draft represents the best compromise achievable and should thus be adopted without changes at the upcoming intergovernmental conference. Other German opposition members may be less supportive and more opportunistic; we note Bavaria's suggestion that it may vote in the Bundesrat against the current draft

Constitution. Teufel's importance may be in convincing the CDU and the broader German public of the merits of the draft, thus helping Germany to close ranks behind a new European constitution. END COMMENT.

BACKGROUND: BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND ERWIN TEUFEL

17. (U) Baden-Wuerttemberg is the third largest state in Germany in terms of population and territory, with a GDP larger than Austria, Sweden, or Belgium. Major U.S. companies, including IBM, Kodak, and Hewlett-Packard, have their German headquarters in Baden-Wuerttemberg. Minister-president since 1991, Teufel has solid control over this largely conservative region.

18. (SBU) Teufel apparently enjoyed broad support from German political parties for his role at the Convention. Teufel befriended Giscard d'Estaing and got along well with FM Joschka Fischer. On the heels of the year-long convention, Teufel has broadened his network of contacts across Europe, but now stands under pressure to support the draft constitution despite his reservations as a political conservative.

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